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challenge

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THERE'S NO DEBATE:

EITHER BUSH OR KERRY MEANS MORE WARS

The first Bush-Kerry debate proved, as CHALLENGE has been reporting, that very little separates the two. Many well-intentioned people hate Bush. But the "ABB" (Anybody-But-Bush) movement is seriously mistaken choosing Kerry as the solution, even partially so, to all our class's problems.

Kerry is just another huckster for the profit system that brought us these problems all along. The solution lies outside the system, in a communist revolution that can attack and destroy the causes of war, unemployment, racism, police state terror and all the other evils capitalism inflicts on us.

Even before the debate, the New York Times, which hates Bush and which speaks for the main, liberal wing of Eastern Establishment bosses, admitted (9/30): "…for all the talk about stark differences…[Bush and Kerry] differ only slightly, if at all…Even on Iraq…neither man is calling for the immediate departure of American troops…Both want to create similar conditions for an American withdrawal."

Bush and Kerry don't differ significantly on Iraq because, as CHALLENGE has written ever since Bush, Sr.'s 1991 Desert Storm genocide, Iraqi oil remains central to U.S. rulers' strategy for world domination, via a choke-hold on Persian Gulf supplies. Iraqi oil is more crucial than ever to that strategy.

The Times now openly admits this. A "Week In Review" article (10/3) lays out the stark facts about the rise in worldwide demand for oil, fueled in large part by the emergence of China and India as major industrial powers and rivals to the U.S.

Oil-producing countries fall into two groups: OPEC (Organization for Petroleum Exporting Countries) and non-OPEC. The Persian Gulf oil producers (Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait), as well as Venezuela and Libya, belong to OPEC. The U.S. and Russia don't.

At present production levels, Russia — which has boosted its output significantly in recent years — has enough oil to last for about 20 years. U.S. supplies may last for 15. Respective estimates for Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait are 80, 115 and 110 years. *The estimate for Iraq is 160 years.*

Four conclusions follow. First, the U.S.'s ability to rule the world by controlling key oil sources and supply routes will continue to depend indefinitely on establishing a hammerlock throughout the Persian Gulf.

Second, right now Iraqi oil is the issue that can tip the balance. Iraqi reserves are, at the very least, a close second to Saudi reserves and potentially the world's greatest.

Third, the very nature of imperialism requires that U.S. rulers do anything and everything to secure Iraqi oil and also to ensure a grip on Saudi and Iranian oil. The present war shows those goals are a long way from successful completion.

Fourth, all of the above explain why very little separates Bush and Kerry. They differ only on HOW to win the U.S. population to fight a war that will surely widen until it enflames the entire Persian Gulf. Eventually it will involve armed struggle pitting other imperialists against the U.S. This is a very long-term scenario understood and endorsed by every major sector of U.S. bosses.

Bush and Kerry also differ on the tactics for fighting the present war. As Bush's detractors in the ruling class complain, he and Rumsfeld have put in "just enough troops to lose." (Thomas Friedman, NYT, 10/3). The Democrats, on the other hand, favored a scenario

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ANTI-RACISTS DISRUPT NAZI RALLY

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 25 — A group of PLP members from New York and Philadelphia linked up today with hundreds of local anti-racists to disrupt a Nazi rally in nearby Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. We prevented them from spreading their white supremacist ideas while building a communist base for revolution.

When our caravan arrived at Valley Forge National Park, a group of anti-racists were already attacking the Nazis, who were punched and run out of the entrance. Our spirited multi-racial group of workers and students quickly took the lead at the counter-demonstration and organized the opposition behind pro-worker, anti-fascist chants: "Hitler rose, Hitler fell, Nazi scum go to hell!" and "Death to the fascists! Power to the workers!"

Although hundreds of local cops, state troopers and U.S. marshals covered the park on foot, horseback, cars and helicopters, a few Nazis arriving unescorted by the Klan in blue were left unprotected. They were punched and kicked, and one was hospitalized.

The anti-racists then went through a fascistic security checkpoint to a metal barricaded police holding pen from where spectators were forced to watch the rally.

As the 100 or so Neo-Nazis, mobilized from several states, assumed a militant stance and lined up single file on the hill below us, hundreds of yards away, the voice of the neo-Nazi leader bombarded us through a megaphone. Immediately we erupted in a fury of anti-racist, pro-worker chants. The Nazi's leader was so taken aback he stopped speaking as we interrupted the rally for several minutes.

We drowned out their message, shouting, "Racist scum, you can't hide, we charge you with genocide!" and "Arab, Jewish, black and white, Workers of the world unite!" disrupting the rally several more times.

Some onlookers asked us to stop chanting so they could hear the Nazis. We explained that there must be no "free speech" for racists because it has always led to murder and terror and always will. We con-

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Iraq Oil Key to U.S. World Domination

EDITORIAL

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that differed on timing — they wanted to invade later — and on the number of ground forces: the Democrats and some liberal Republicans wanted significantly more troops than Bush has committed.

But the U.S. military is already "stretched thin." Former soldiers are beginning to resist a special wartime call-up program. The Army National Guard missed its 2004 recruiting target by 10%. Congress is making noises about expanding the army by 20,000 soldiers. Kerry wants 40,000. (NYT, 10/3) U.S. troops are already on war duty in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Korea, in addition to Iraq and U.S. bases in Europe. With the Iraqi insurgency mounting and Iran coming "right to the top of the agenda, right under Iraq" (Geoffrey Kemp of the Nixon Center, NYT, 9/30) no matter who wins the 2004 election, it's clear U.S. troops will be fighting more wars and will need more soldiers to fight them. Kerry's proposed numbers are just a pre-election drop in the bucket to prepare us for what lies ahead — he doesn't want to lose votes by revealing the magnitude of the need for cannon-fodder.

"More Troops Needed In Iraq, Officials Say," trumpets a September 24 headline in a Washington Post article by Thomas Ricks, the leading military journalist for the Liberal Establishment press. We can't predict the date, but this "need" will at some time require the restoration of a military draft. The main obstacle is political. The rulers still dread the "Vietnam Syndrome" and fear that the working class will not enthusiastically fight and die for U.S. imperialism. They are right — at the moment. But they're also working overtime to change this scenario, to inspire a mass movement for war and for the domestic police state needed to mobilize for it.

PLP can play a decisive role in the process, to provide correct answers to the question and solutions to the problem. Imperialism makes war inevitable, as its solution" to each imperialist's fight for markets, cheap labor and especially oil.

Bush has failed dismally in this role. This failure explains the liberal press's disdain for him. Kerry has yet to prove that he can succeed. The rulers' political disarray gives our side an opportunity. As the casualties mount among both U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians, the war will spread in Iraq and widen throughout the Persian Gulf. Many workers and soldiers will begin looking angrily for answers to deep questions about why such atrocities occur. The rulers will offer them racist and fascist lies. Without communist leadership, large numbers of workers may be vulnerable to the lies, but this negative outcome is far from certain.

PLP can play a decisive role in the process, to provide correct answers to the question and solutions to the problem. Imperialism makes war inevitable, as its solution" to each imperialist's fight for markets, cheap labor and especially oil. Only a communist-led working class has the power and the ideological arsenal to turn such wars into their opposite.

In the present election and beyond, the many honest people in the "ABB" movement must be won to the goal of smashing U.S. imperialism's abominable oil war in Iraq, while winning more workers to follow the red flag and the communist ideas in CHALLENGE.✪

Kerry Advisor's 'Grand Strategy" = FOURTH REICH

(*Earlier articles in this series discussed the nature of the state and ways in which capitalists use government and related tools to enforce their class dictatorship. But capitalists themselves often disagree over what the state should look like and how it should operate. The following examines conflicts between the Bush and Kerry camps concerning the role of the state.*)

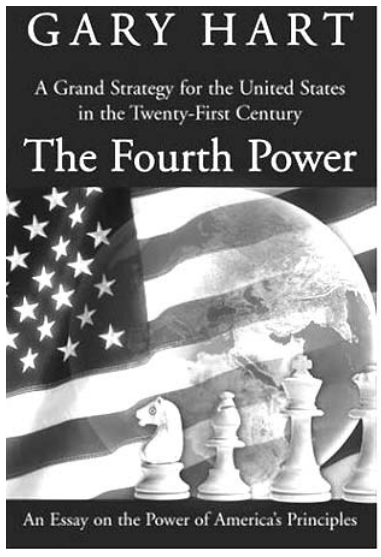
In the 1920s, Calvin Coolidge said, "The business of America is business," and ran a government that interfered very little in the affairs of capitalists. Ten years later, Franklin Roosevelt (FDR) undertook a vast restructuring of the government that would eventually militarize the entire nation and put virtually every business and industry under tight, wartime regulation. Today, growing challenges to U.S. imperialism have John Kerry and his backers pining for the FDR days.

Gary Hart, one of Kerry's most influential advisers, has written a new policy-setting book called "The Fourth Power." It demands that government officials, from the president on down, adopt an imperialist "grand strategy" in which every action of the state aims at bolstering the U.S.'s worldwide "leadership." Like FDR, Hart wants to use the state to subordinate the greed of individual capitalists to the needs of the capitalist class as a whole. He makes a sharp distinction between the "profit motive" and "national interests." Referring specifically to the military, Hart calls for reversing Bush's tax cuts, "Every revenue dollar returned to the nation's most wealthy is a dollar not invested in our common wealth and nation." (p. 77)

Hart also hopes to use fears of terrorism to fashion a larger, more consolidated police apparatus. Bush has proved reluctant on this. Says Hart, "The Department of Homeland Security requires three critical integrations: the first is integration of this wide array of existing federal offices and bureaus; the second is the integration of the federal system — national, state, and local governments; the third is the integration of the public and private sectors." (p. 67) He then repeats the Hart-Rudman Commission's insistence that the National Guard become a nationwide "homeland security" police force.

Hart envisions a militarized society with millions more in uniform than exists now. He finds "a surprising applicability of the principles of armed conflict to the multifaceted human endeavor." (p. 35) To repair troop shortages stemming from Bush's failure to mobilize for wartime, Hart urges everyone who can to become a "citizen soldier." In the short term, enlistment would be voluntary but, "World wars require conscription and massive standing armies." (p. 50) And developments in Russia and China may someday have "profound implications for the United States and the world." (p. 96)

In addition to troop strength, Hart-Kerry's view of the state's military arm differs from Bush & Co.'s on the need for allies. The Democrats seek a multi-national fig leaf for U.S. domination, by armed force, of the world's trade in oil and other strategic commodities. "We should consider…creation of a NATO intervention force with several missions: keeping the sea-lanes of communication open; protecting the flow of oil supplies; and dealing with any force that might want to block international commerce or exact some tribute for the open usage of any of the world's critical maritime straits." (p. 95)


GARY HART
A Grand Strategy for the United States in the Twenty-First Century
The Fourth Power
An Essay on the Power of America's Principles

Hart says that when it comes to the U.S. capitalist class's most important source of profits, the U.S. military should be even more deadly than Bush's war machine. According to the liberal ex-senator, the U.S. needs "light, swift, and lethal intervention forces to protect America's legitimate interests." (p. 158)

"The Fourth Power" praises the "massive government action" of the FDR era. But it presents a fascistic vision of the state more closely resembling Nazi Germany. It should really be called "The Fourth Reich." The only viable alternative to rule by Bush or the equally Hitlerite Kerry is a working-class dictatorship in which the communist party is the state.

(Next: The State under Communism: The Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Party.)

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR

✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of the profit system, like wages and divisions of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society where sharing is based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers.

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CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
PO Box 808
BROOKLYN, NY 11202
www.plp.org
email:
cd188@juno.com
718 630 9440

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AFL-CIO FIGHTS FOR DEMOCRATS, NOT FOR JOBS

Bush and Kerry are battling to win the state of Ohio, but neither has a plan, nor can they have one, to put the state's 237,000 workers who lost their jobs in the past four years back to work. Another 12,000 went by the wayside in August, the highest in the country. Canton, a city of 81,000, lost 3,700 since 2001. When Bush visited the Timkin bearing plant there last year, he promised a million new jobs. Now Timkin's boss, a big Bush donor, is closing three plants and putting another 1,300 on the street.

So Kerry, the AFL-CIO's man, would seem like a shoo-in, right? Yet, with all these mass layoffs, a Univ. of Cincinnati poll has Bush leading in Ohio by 54% to Kerry's 43% — if you can believe their figures. How come?

Bushites say it's the "moral" issues ("Jesus loves W"). But most of these jobless workers were laid off from unionized plants and have seen AFL-CIO honchos allow all these jobs to go down the drain without a fight. While these labor fakers can spend millions to elect Kerry, they never mobilize the strength of all these hundreds of thousands of workers to confront the bosses.

So many of them may be so fed up with the union leaders and their Democratic bosses that they may be thinking of voting for Bush as the "lesser evil"!

Of course, if Kerry wins, there's not much he will, or can, do for the jobless. He's as wedded to the capitalist system as Bush is, a system that intrinsically produces these layoffs. Capitalist competition, based on the drive for maximum profits in a planless society, inevitably leads to each boss trying to capture as much of the market as he thinks he can. This inevitably leads to overproduction and periodic booms and busts. This creates a reserve army of the unemployed which forces workers to accept lower wages. And while Kerry's making a big deal over "outsourcing" jobs abroad, he's mum about U.S. manufacturers subcontracting work out to racist low-paying outfits here that pay mainly black, Latin and immigrant workers and youth slave-labor wages. For the bosses, less money going to the working class means more money to finance imperialist wars.

Remember when Clinton took over in '92 and came in with a Democratic-controlled Congress? The union chiefs blabbed that they now had a "friend in the White House." But in those two years prior to the Gingrich take-over, Clinton broke the American Airlines strike and his Democrats didn't pass one piece of legislation to help workers, especially doing nothing about the legalization of scabs, supposedly the union bosses' "top priority."

Whether Republican or Democrat, whether Bush or Kerry, workers will always get the shaft. That's the nature of capitalism — profits first, workers last. The electoral circus sucks workers into a bottomless pit that says capitalism can be "reformed." Never happen. That's why we say revolution, not reform.✪

"Your newspaper helps me cope with the deluge of double-speak and Bush-Fascism. Keep up the good work and please renew me for two years."--NK

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Teachers Back Resolution Opposing Permanent War Budget

A resolution to study the effects of a permanent war budget on the schools passed overwhelmingly at our teachers' area union meeting. Top U.S. policy-makers like Peter Peterson of the Council on Foreign Relations have called for a more serious war budget, a "war economy" for the foreseeable future. (Foreign Affairs, "Riding for a Fall") A "permanent war budget" means severe cutbacks in all social services as well as an increase in the development of a fascist police state.

The U.S. ruling class needs the Mid-East oil fields, the primary source of the world's oil. As inter-imperialist rivalry sharpens over the control of this most precious resource, world supremacy is at stake.

In the schools, the unions and other mass organizations, it's necessary to expose the war and war budget as the source of the racist, anti-worker attacks here. While the rulers work 24/7 to try convincing us that the war is in "our national interest," PLP must show imperialist war is only in the bosses' interests.

When the resolution was proposed — "that the union establish an ad hoc committee to study the results of a 'permanent war budget' on our profession and our schools" — the leadership said there was already a committee to deal with similar issues But the answer came back, "the more the better. We need this now." The resolution passed 47 to 7.

Several teachers expressed their gratitude. "Thank you so much for bringing that up," said one. "My son just came back from Iraq, and they spend so much money on this unjust war."

The following day at our school's lunch-hour union meeting, the resolution was reported to the membership. One of the teachers opposed it, asking, "What does that have to do with our union?" "It has everything to do with our union," responded the member who proposed it. When another teacher questioned the truth of the war economy, he was given the Foreign Affairs article and went off to read it. The discussion was cut short when the lunch period ended. But it will continue.

Now we can make this ad hoc committee a reality and show teachers and students alike exactly how the war budget and the war affect all of us.

This small but significant example points us in the right direction. Most teachers and most workers not only see but feel the contradictions of the bosses' imperialist oil war. Proposing resolutions and job actions that reveal the effects of the bosses' permanent war budget opens the door to struggle and resistance, exposing the racist and imperialist nature of the war and deepening the understanding that the source of these attacks lies in the nature of capitalism.

In this area, we'll continue this struggle as well as join our co-workers and students at upcoming demonstrations. A revolution is organized through small steps that eventually lead to a qualitative transformation on the long road of building a revolutionary movement that will ultimately smash imperialism and establish the dictatorship of the working class.✪

Army Recruiters Take Aim At Grammar School Kids!

WORCESTER, MA, Sept. 24 — The U.S. Army, desperate to meet recruiting goals, has fraudulently recruited public school kids as young as grammar school age here and in surrounding areas. The recruiters have a traveling horror show called "Spirit of America" which supposedly shows the history of the Army, but instead it's used to recruit high school students and propagandize all.

The local school officials rented buses and forced up to 5,000 kids to attend this event as a captive audience. The local officials would later say they thought the show had "historical value." This history showed the U.S. Army in action, killing Native Indians (racism), Vietnam (imperialism), and other apologies for capitalist crimes.

Local anti-war activists, including PLP members, helped organize a rally protesting the recruitment of children for imperialist wars. PLP members held signs condemning the imperialist oil war in Iraq. These signs were sharply different than the peace activists whose signs said only that war was "bad," with no class analysis. Many kids and teachers approached us with thanks for opposing the military and imperialist wars.

Local officials were somewhat embarrassed as the Army was clearly recruiting kids, setting up recruiting tables and getting names and addresses. In 2001 the same officials suspended scores of high school students when they left school to attend an anti-war rally opposing the war in Afghanistan.

In this struggle, PLP has advanced the view that the cycles of imperialist wars cannot be ended until capitalism, which causes war, is replaced by communism. We must spread the truth to counter the military propaganda targeting kids and organize young people to fight school systems that send them to war while denying them diplomas and a decent education.✪

Anti-Racists Disrupt Nazi Rally

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vinced most, but not all, of these anti-racist protesters that it's necessary to destroy racism, not listen to it. When Hitler was able to spread his racism, it led to World War II, killing 100 million people.

In addition to confronting the fascist ideas at the rally, most importantly we spread communist ideas to help build a Party base. Several pacifist and anarchist protestors joined our group and picked up our chants to help drown out the Nazis. Eight contacts were made with local residents who were interested in the Party's ideas. Over 150 copies of CHALLENGE and 600 leaflets were distributed, both of which linked the many brutal attacks against workers and our families here at home to genocide for oil and imperial power worldwide. We connected the cops' protection of fascists in Pennsylvania to bombing families in Iraq.

When some of us arrived home in Philadelphia, a black worker, upon hearing about our actions, said, "Fighting terrorists ought to begin at home. They can go around the world searching for terrorists, but here at home it's a different story. They protect terrorists here!" By saying "they," he plainly knew the U.S. government isn't "ours" but "theirs" — very close to saying that "they" are terrorists themselves, which they certainly are.

The event itself showed clearly that even a few people can achieve positive results. But an insufficient organizing effort limited the number we brought to the protest. These racist groups are growing and that means opposing racism and building a mass communist movement is more important than ever. Next time we'll work harder to be ready for these fascists.✪

Blame Capitalism

Not Mother Nature, for Devastation in Haiti

***Port au Prince, HAITI**—Early this year, the U.S. used fascist goons to get rid of Aristide. Since then, things have gone from bad to worse. Workers must not side with any of these bosses.*

The latest toll from Hurricane Jeanne in Haiti includes — just in the city of Gonaives (population 250,000) — over 3,000 confirmed dead, 200,000 homeless and no safe drinking water. Diarrhea and other water-borne sicknesses are killing the most vulnerable, children and the aged. In solidarity, workers have organized fund drives at their jobs and in their communities to send food and clothing to Haiti. But all this tells only one side of the story.

Almost every newspaper and TV story about Haiti paints a picture of an unfortunate people at the mercy of nature, with 98% of the country deforested. The stories evoke sympathy and pity. Some governments sent money to rebuild, though not nearly enough. (The U.S. first "offered" the grand sum of $50,000!) There's also lots of blaming the victim. In June, the new U.S.-appointed Prime Minister Gerard Latortue said the problem was Haitian peasants cutting down the trees for charcoal.

But these stories don't evoke anger at and hatred for what capitalism and imperialism — not Mother Nature — has rained down on the Haitian masses. And they don't reveal that Haiti has been systematically stripped of its natural resources by the bourgeoisie, past and present, foreign and local.

When the French rulers colonized Haiti in the 17th century, the vegetation in this mountainous third of the island of Hispaniola was so thick and dense that it was as dark as night during the day. They imported African slaves to cut down the trees, which were shipped back to France, and to grow sugar in the plains and coffee in the mountains, both of which were also sent to Europe. Slavery and this deforestation of Haiti made France rich. Imperialism flourished.

When the Dio Rouj river overflowed in the rural community of Mapou in southeastern Haiti and the neighboring Dominican town of Jimaní at the end of May — even before hurricane season began — and more than 2,000 were killed and 70,000 made homeless, CHALLENGE reported that the local hardwood gaiac trees had been cut down and sent to the U.S., never to be replanted. The grinding poverty forces rural workers to cut down their own trees and burn them into charcoal, then sell them to urban workers for cooking fuel. So when the rains come, and rivers overflow, there are no trees to hold back the water. Mudslides wash away houses, crops and livestock, and thousands of people die in a single day. Hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

While hurricanes and floods devastate the Haitian working class, armed gangs freely control the streets of several Haitian cities. This includes Gonaives, the birthplace of Haiti's historic fight against slavery and for independence 200 years ago, but also the hometown of the death squads which overran Haiti earlier this year, leading the U.S. Embassy to force former Pres. Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile. These gangs are victimizing women in particular. After waiting incredibly long hours in lines to get food and water from the international aid donors, these women are waylaid on their way home and their food and water are stolen.

All this occurs under the impotent if not approving eyes of the U.S.-installed government in Port-au-Prince, which warmly embraced death squad leader Guy Phillippe when he marched into Gonaives. In the capital, mass demonstrations calling for the return of Aristide are met by armed police, four of whom were killed last week. These workers are being misled in supporting Aristide, who capitulated to U.S. imperialism and got very rich in the bargain, while doing nothing to alleviate the conditions of daily life for workers. He was a good reformer — for himself, not for the masses.

A Haitian proverb says, "Dèyè mòn gen mòn" — Behind the mountains are more mountains. Well, behind the lackeys of imperialism are more lackeys — that is, until the working class in Haiti builds its revolutionary communist party to seize the reins and establish workers' power. Under a workers' state, science and technology will be used to tame nature, to make it work for us, not against us. What we can't prevent we will protect, and what we can't protect we will prepare for. We will nurture the environment for the benefit of all of humankind.✪

Worker-Student Unity Best Way to Honor Victims of Olympic Massacre

MEXICO CITY — On October 2, thousands marched — as they did over the past three decades — to honor the hundreds of students murdered by the army and cops during protests before the 1968 Olympics held here. But just as then, the main question facing workers and youth is: communist revolution or capitalist barbarism?

Liberal politicians are using these marches to push for more "democratic openings," claiming that 1968 did just that, but "more democracy" is needed. Well, capitalism today is as murderous as it was then. Thousands are being killed, from Chiapas, to the women of Ciudad Juarez's maquiladoras, to those who crossed the border fleeing mass unemployment now victimized by racist superexploitation as agricultural workers in the USA, or as slave-wage workers in Houston, LA, NYC, Chicago, etc.

Some politicians are just blaming former President Luis Echeverría. Indeed, he should pay for his crimes, but the main reason they're attacking him is his current opposition to privatization of the energy industry.

The main lesson of 1968 was militant students uniting with the working class. Unfortunately, they lacked a revolutionary communist leadership to forge that unity. This is the road the student movement must take today, here and worldwide, to get out of the confusion and opportunism created by liberals and fake leftists. We in PLP must redouble our efforts to ensure this becomes a reality. Then we can avenge all the victims of capitalism.✪

All Bosses Are Enemies of the Working Class

General James Hill, of the U.S. Army's Southern Command, testified recently before the Congressional Armed Forces Committee that "radical populism" is now becoming a threat in Latin America, along with terrorism and drugs. He accused some Latin American leaders — in Venezuela, Bolivia and Haiti and the anti-free market consensus created by Lula and Kichner, rulers of Brazil and Argentina — of exploiting deep popular frustrations over the even bigger social and economic inequalities stemming from the failure of free market reforms. "This radical populism feeds anti-U.S. feelings," Hill concluded.

However, these "radical populists" are defending the interests of the big bosses. But they appeal to people's nationalism to strengthen the domestic market. Those in Mexico seek Asian and European imperialist investments in the local energy industry that are more favorable to their own local interests. They don't want to be dragged down by an economic debacle involving the U.S. bosses' quagmire in their war for oil in Iraq and Afghanistan. But U.S. bosses worry that investments by these rival imperialists will come at the expense of the U.S. in what the latter considers its "backyard."

While free market capitalism is discredited throughout Latin America, Mexico's President Fox is still a fierce defender of this form of capitalist exploitation. Fox has basically led a putsch to stop Lopez Obrador, Mexico City mayor, one of the "radical populists" referred to by General Hill.

For workers, following these nationalist bosses is as much a death trap as following pro-U.S. imperialists rulers like Fox.

Carlos Slim, probably Latin America's richest man, is one of Mexico's nationalist bosses. He recently told El Pais, Spain's leading newspaper, that the development model pushed by the International Monetary Fund has set Mexico back 20 years in per capita growth: "It is time to go from a model dedicated to stabilization to a model based on growth and creation of jobs." But Slim is really worried about the growth of his own fortune. He wants to keep his telephone industry monopoly growing (as it is now in Central and South America). Slim is united with Mexico City's mayor to turn the historical center of the city into a world class tourist and financial center.

All these bosses — free marketers or nationalist populists, are causing the growing misery of the working class. Over half of the Latin America's 400 million inhabitants live below the poverty level, including 102 million in extreme poverty, which cannot even feed their families each day. It's the old story — the poor are getting poorer, the rich richer, while the middle class disappears.

All these bosses are getting away with murder because, as they keep on reminding us, "communism is dead, and capitalism is the only game in town." But we in PLP are making sure that the "death" of communism is premature. Worker-led societies in the former Soviet Union and China showed that communists can build a better world. We know now that socialism's main error was retaining too many aspects of capitalism, not abolishing the wage system, among others. But these glimpses of what communism could bring to humanity will again inspire the international working class to fight to eliminate the cancer of capitalism once and for all.✪

Politics Guiding Garment Workers' Class Struggle

"We should have a work stoppage," said a garment worker when a foreman barred anyone eating lunch before 12 noon. When one woman worker supported the idea, another said, "This is too much; the harassment has increased and we shouldn't allow it to continue."

Since the boss moved the factory to a new location to increase profits, attacks by his henchmen have increased. Although it's these straw bosses giving the orders, the attacks are coming from the boss. We workers need to respond to them collectively, organizing a committee of struggle that represents the interests of all the workers. The boss's weakness is his dependence on us, the workers, to produce his merchandise.

When the boss heard about the planned stoppage, he screamed to high heaven. He even phoned a worker at her house to ask about it and said she should collect the signatures of all the workers who were unhappy.

When we discussed the boss's "request," the majority felt it wasn't a good idea because it would be handing over to the boss the names of his enemies. We also posed the alternatives of a spontaneous work stoppage versus a better planned one.

This discussion revealed a struggle between individualism and collectivity. There are workers who are angry at or hate the bosses and their henchmen, but unfortunately only see the struggle from an individual point of view. They want to satisfy their anger by firing the foreman.

This position was criticized as individualistic. The position that won was: it's better to wait, prepare and organize the workers into a committee of struggle and look for the best time, when the majority will participate and benefit from the work stoppage.

'This discussion revealed a struggle between individualism and collectivity. There are workers who are angry at or hate the bosses and their henchmen, but unfortunately only see the struggle from an individual point of view. They want to satisfy their anger by firing the foreman.'

There are many political discussions in this garment factory — that our super-exploitation supplies part of the money to finance the imperialist war for oil in Iraq; about immigration, and how racist laws divide us undocumented workers from our class brothers and sisters, citizens and documented, to super-exploit all of us; about fascism, and so on.

We also discuss the strike as a useful weapon for workers, but one with limits. A strike can fight immediate problems, but it can't end racism, fascism, imperialist wars or the miserable conditions in which hundreds of millions of workers live. But we pose the need to organize strikes and other struggles so workers can see our collective strength. We also point to the need for communist revolution as the only way to end our suffering, because it's the only way to eliminate capitalism.

There are many debates. CHALLENGE is circulated hand to hand inside the factory, but not enough. Yet when it's offered outside the factory, many workers buy it. Self critically, we in PLP must work harder to win more workers to accept our ideas inside the factory. This will lead to more collective action against the bosses and to the growth of PLP.✪

Sharpening Shop Discussions Leading To PLP Recruits

CALIFORNIA — "Listen well; I will never join your Party," said a worker after discussing CHALLENGE'S communist ideas showing the need for workers to join PLP.

"A big-mouth falls down easier than a one-legged person," explained a comrade, meaning the worker could be won to our Party.

"I don't fall for that. I saw how the leaders of the revolutionary movement in El Salvador sold out after the end of the war and became bosses themselves," replied the worker.

Our comrade explained the Party's view of what happened in El Salvador and how workers must educate themselves politically so they can see the difference between a working-class communist revolution and a "national liberation" struggle, which leads to one group of bosses replacing another.

This is not the first political struggle in this shop, but each time they get sharper. We have strong ties to fellow workers and friends there. Our families socialize. The reluctant worker comes from a poor peasant family in El Salvador, who were basically serfs on a big hacienda. All the value they produced was kept by the owners. Many such families were chained to the owners through debts in the local grocery store, also owned by the hacienda bosses. This worker got his family out of that horror, but still hates the bosses and such super-exploitation.

Shortly afterwards the worker approached the comrade and asked, "Do you think I can play a role in your Party?" "You're a worker," said the PLP'er and therefore have many traits to be a leader of the working class." This led to many more questions and discussions, part of recruiting and consolidating new comrades.

A white worker in the same shop said, during a discussion about Iraq and the economic problems caused by the war, "I'm a Republican."

"Why?" asked the comrade.

"Well, Bush gave us back $500 in a tax rebate."

"But how much must we pay for the health plan? How much more are we paying for the war in Iraq?" asked the comrade.

This led to a good discussion of the real cause of the war — control of Middle Eastern oil wealth, and how "war against terror" was basically a war against workers.

"What you say makes sense," said the worker. As a matter of fact, after 9/11 I told my wife that I thought it was a plan by Bush to be accepted by the people. No matter who wins, Republicans or Democrats, things won't get better for workers. I believe there's going to be a revolution," the worker concluded.

Many times appearances can stop us from waging a healthy struggle. These two examples are part of our efforts to increase CHALLENGE distribution, develop class struggle and widen our political base in this shop. The political environment created by those who already read our paper and those who help distribute it makes us confident we can sharpen the struggle to build PLP.✪

'All that relying on Democrats got us is more budget cuts . . ."

AUBURN, MASS, Sept. 20 — A call for job actions, for reliance on the membership's collective strength and for a strike received growing support at the State Leadership meeting of the Massachusetts Community College Council. The Council represents over 6,000 faculty and professional staff in the State's 15 community colleges. This annual Leadership meeting had been organized to launch a campaign to maintain Democratic Party control of the State Legislature by recruiting members for phone-banking, manning voting stations and conducting voter registration drives. However, the focus turned to job actions.

State union leaders were organizing chapter leaders against Governor Romney's fascist union-busting tactics. Just days earlier, Romney had vetoed a bill that would fund the raises of thousands of higher education workers. He also wants right-to-work measures that would threaten the union's existence. The union's "answer" was to elect Democratic Party "pro-education" candidates next month.

One rank-and-file speaker declared that, "Relying on the Democrats has been our strategy, and that of the whole union movement, for years and all it's gotten us is more budget cuts." The rank-and-filer exposed the Democratically-controlled Legislature's 30 years of budget votes that undercut the State's vital social services; linked Romney's vicious cuts to ongoing wars in the Middle East; and concluded with a call for a strike. Two members rose to enthusiastically support that idea.

As discussion continued, chapter leaders became more committed to job actions and to depending on the membership's collective strength rather than on wheeling and dealing at the State House. The next day, the Roxbury Community College union chapter voted overwhelmingly to pursue work-to-rule and to picket Governor Romney's house.

The State government's sharpening attacks are impelling faculty and professional staff to become more militant and to rely on ourselves. Job actions reveal who are our friends and who are our enemies.

As events progress, professionalism will impede us. It diverts our loyalty to the college and the profession, rather than to the students. This works against building unity with students or asking for their support as fellow workers with a stake in the faculty/staff struggle. The college administrators are not our allies. Their high-priced jobs depend on their being loyal servants to the Board of Higher Education and State government.

The political will to fight back on the job will increase as more faculty and staff understand the relationship between the attacks on us and the ongoing crisis of capitalism. We're being attacked because our needs and demands are obstacles to the bosses' plan to use community colleges as centers serving corporate and military needs. The deep skepticism among faculty and staff about the war in Iraq, the "war against terrorism" and the electoral system can be transformed into a higher level of class consciousness. Carrying out a vigorous rank-and-file-led work-to-rule campaign and winning more union members to be CHALLENGE readers will help this develop.✪

LETTERS

Youth Experiences at Protest Against GOP Convention

Here are some thoughts from young people from Seattle about their experiences while protesting the Republican National Convention in New York:

"New York was far from what I had imagined. The people in New York were nice in giving directions and so forth, and Brooklyn alone had such an interesting culture. When I ask someone for directions in Seattle they look at me funny, almost as if they were scared. At the march people asked me about my shirt, which said 'Revolt, Don't Vote.' I told them that replacing the president wasn't going to mean the war would be finished or that the troops would come home. The truth is that the system has to change and once that happens maybe we can be closer to a more peaceful world."

"The thing that stands out for me was the protest. I never saw so many people in one place at one time. I also enjoyed the BBQ because it was fun being around a big group of people all coming together to have a good time. The one thing I didn't enjoy was selling CHALLENGE because it made me feel uncomfortable, handing out something I know nothing about. I learned a little bit about communism and I kind of agree with it, but I'm not ready for that kind of change yet."

"I had an exciting experience in New York, participating in several activities. I gave out leaflets and tried to sell some CHALLENGES. I was very surprised at how many people wanted to read the leaflets and the paper. I was kind of nervous because people would look at me funny, like 'why are you doing this?' I was afraid they'd ask me a question that I couldn't answer. The hardest thing was trying to sell CHALLENGE, but it was also a fun experience. I enjoyed talking to people and also learned some things."

"My first visit to New York was hot, fun and tiring. The protest was definitely the highlight of the trip. The people I met were welcoming and nice. I really appreciated the hospitality we received from all the PLP members from New York and Boston."

THE SEATTLE CREW

CHALLENGE comment: Thanks for your input. You all have a lot of good questions you should discuss with PLP members in your area: Everyone should be exchanging views on the best ways to sell the paper, what we do when someone asks a question we can't answer, and so on. Keep at it!

T-SHIRT!

Put forward a revolutionary line this election year with Progressive Labor Party's white T-Shirt that reads:

DON'T VOTE
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

REVOLT! DON'T VOTE

SIZES: M, L, XL. Send $10 plus $1 for shipping and handling.
Check or Money Order to:CHALLENGE PERIODICALS
PO Box 808 Brooklyn, NY 11202

Excited Over Finding REAL Communist Party

Thank you for the issue of CHALLENGE and "Road to Revolution 4." Finally I've found a Communist Party (PLP) which holds to a revolutionary communist line. I've been a Marxist-Leninist for a long time, and I've yet to find a "Communist" party (until now) which did not hold either a revisionist and/or opportunist line. Most, if not all, have retreated, especially from the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and revolution, as well as from the basic Marxist principle that class antagonisms cannot be reconciled. They submit (or openly support) the bosses' sham "democracy" and love being able to vote for the member of the ruling class who they "choose" to exploit and oppress them, either in the White House, Congress or State Legislature.

These fakes are simply tools of the ruling class sent out to fool the masses. I want to join PLP and fight for revolution and communism. People here are quite receptive to communism and feel the capitalist system is outdated and undemocratic by any definition of "democracy" and needs to go, the sooner the better. I'm willing to work with the Party in any way the Party has use for me. I'm 29, currently unemployed; I was raised working class and have been shafted all too often by the ruling class and capitalism, and I'll work and fight until (and after) it's replaced by a communist revolution.

J.A. (LITTLE JOE)

Spread Red Ideas In Migrant 'Concentration Camp'

I work packing corn in what can best be described as a concentration camp. It's a real camp in which migrant workers like me live together for several months. The positive aspect of this "jail" is we get to know each other very well, with all kinds of conversations, from politics to sports to religion.

There are two 12-hours shifts. We're on call 24 hours a day, forced into this slavery because it's the only kind of work many of us undocumented workers can get to feed our families on miserable paychecks every two weeks.

"This guy seems to be a communist," is how some workers refer to me. Some of my best friends are reading DESAFIO.

Year after year most of these workers travel with their families and friends from the Texas-Mexico border to work in a cold Mid-western state. I'm one of the few workers who come from another region of the world. Men and women live in collective dorms, separated by sex, married couples. We have a food hall, showers and other services like in a jail or a military barracks.

Literature in Spanish is very rare so DESAFIO and the new "Communist" magazine in Spanish are very helpful. I've been reading a book by the German writer Günter Wallraff about the rabid racism "guest workers" from Turkey suffer in Germany. The author passed as a Turk and experienced the racism personally. Although it's limited in denouncing racism as an individual adventure, but when he risks his life in dangerous jobs like cleaning nuclear plants, it hits migrant workers like me as much too real.

I also read "Garabombo, the Invisible Man" by Manuel Scorza. It's about indigenous people fighting seizure of their land, and their endless struggle for land reform which never comes to Peru, Colombia or any other Latin American country. The meager land these peasants are left with is being taken away by paramilitary death squads and international agribusiness monopolies, which control prices and distribution. In this book, people suffer and get killed but continue to organize and fight back.

One passage struck me: "We have to put an end to these abuses from town to town, and the medicine is a general rebellion….The main thing is to build a general staff….You know as former soldiers the key is having a general command, which will never die."

We know that reforms are just that; they don't change much. Only communism will plant the seeds to feed us all, without providing huge profits for a few bosses.

RED CORN

Fascist Attack On Poor Workers Collecting Cans

Recently I was collecting cans at a place I've usually done so for many years when the head of security rounded up myself and other collectors and told us if we came back we'd be arrested. I openly said that this was a fascist attack on poor workers.

The next Saturday, I had an opportunity to resist and take some direct actions against these fascists. When it was time to collect cans again at the same place, I told my father I was a little scared. He said there's no difference between resisting obvious fascists and those fascists who wear the cloak of the state. I realized that resisting fascism is not a part-time commitment.

Of course, the best way is to organize workers, soldiers and students to fight for communism, so that every job, even collecting cans, will be one with dignity!

I collected cans that day, at the same place, although I was careful.

RED WORKER

NY Unionists in Solidarity with Teachers in Colombia

Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe came to New York City late last month and opened a Juan Valdez coffee shop — the first of many his government and coffee growers hope to bring to the U.S. While Uribe smiled for the cameras, fascist paramilitary forces supported by Uribe and the Army were murdering workers on the coffee plantations and in all the country's industries.

Workers were scheduling a massive strike for Oct. 12 to protest the death-squad murders of trade unionists, against privatization, etc. Three-quarters of all such killings worldwide occur in Colombia. This year alone, 23 teachers, mostly women, have been murdered.

Amnesty International says Colombia is the third largest recipient of U.S. military aid. Contrary to what many think — that the atrocities committed in Iraq have "discredited" the U.S. worldwide and are solely caused by the Bush gang — the support of fascist killers has been the foreign policy of both U.S. bosses'parties for a long time.

Education International, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association are supporting the strike by teachers and Colombia's labor movement. NYC's Professional Staff Congress is scheduling a picket line at the Colombian consulate backing the strikers (Oct. 12, 10 E. 46 St. near Madison Ave., 4:00 to 6:00 PM).

It's good to show international solidarity with fellow workers fighting fascist repression in other countries. But we must also understand that the enemy is not just Uribe or Bush. It was the Clinton administration that began Plan Colombia, which increased U.S. military aid to the Colombian army and the death squads. Indeed, there is no lesser evil politician or boss; they're all enemies of the working class.✪

Creating Capitalism's Gravediggers Among Lesotho's Slave Laborers

As Marx said, capitalism creates its own gravediggers, referring to the rise of the working class. Lesotho, the landlocked mountainous country encircled by South Africa, is a good example. Almost a year ago, 20,000 striking textile workers marching to the offices of the Employers' Association were attacked by mounted cops in the capital city Maseru, killing two workers and injuring over 100. The workers were delivering a petition opposing the bosses' 5% wage-hike offer and instead demanding 15%.

Today, these workers' misery has not improved, but textile bosses' profits are sky-high. They're taking advantage of the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which gives 35 African countries zero tariff access to the U.S. market on a range of different products. AGOA, begun in 2001, will expire in 2015. AGOA led to a jump in investments from foreign bosses, mainly Taiwan capitalists, in the Lesotho textile industry. These textile maquiladoras now employ over 54,000 workers, Lesotho's biggest industry. The country's 2.2 million people are among the poorest of Africa.

Before the garment boom, the country relied heavily on money sent home by over 100,000 Lesotho men working in South African mines. But by the late 1990s, half of those miners lost their jobs when the worldwide crisis of overproduction forced mineral prices down, so the bosses mechanized to keep profits up by using fewer workers.

Unlike South African mines, the garment maquiladoras mainly employ women. Despite what the Toronto Globe and Mail (8/10/04) calls "unannounced monthly visits" by inspectors from U.S. clothing giants like GAP (which buy textiles from Lesotho), working conditions are deplorable. "Unions officials complain that the factories are boiling in the summer and freezing cold in the winter. The facilities are poorly ventilated, ill lit and lack proper sanitation facilities and fire extinguishers....Only 20% of the garment workers are unionized." (Globe and Mail)

BBC World News (3/15/02) quoted another unionist: "The record of exports looks good, but it's through the sweat of people forced to work Monday to Sunday. Unemployment means people take all shifts that are available. As much as we are happy with Lesotho's exports, it must be known it is [achieved] through a system of slavery."

Billy, a former union general secretary, said workers faced mass dismissals to avoid payment of benefits; restrictions on union activity; at least one case of beatings of workers by factory officials; and exceptionally low wages. A skilled textile worker earns just over

$50 a month. When AGOA expires in 2015, these jobs will disappear. The textile bosses will move to wherever wages are still lower.

Since capitalism is a system based solely on profits, nothing is done for the major health problem facing Lesotho. One in three adults there is infected with the AIDS virus — the world's third-highest rate. Factory owners spend "too much" money training new workers to replace those who become sick or leave to nurse dying family members, complains Ms. Chen, spokesperson for the textile companies. Her bosses' association is asking the government for tax breaks, wage subsidies or help with utility bills, threatening otherwise to take the jobs elsewhere. (Globe and Mail)

No wonder workers struck en masse a year ago. The only "good" thing about these textile maquiladoras is that they've created 50,000 proletarians. These workers — mainly women — can indeed become the vanguard of capitalism's gravediggers. But they're missing a key ingredient: a revolutionary communist Party to help them realize their historic revolutionary task. The unity of Lesotho's workers, along with those of South Africa — whose revolutionary anti-apartheid struggles were betrayed by the ANC's new black bourgeoisie (with support from the treachery of the old South African Communist Party and Nelson Mandela) — can be the force to bury capitalism in a permanent grave.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Imperialism will need draft

...Some military officers and political figures have long questioned whether 135,000 troops is a large enough force to prevail in Iraq.

What if another big deployment is needed? Estimates vary widely on how many additional troops might be required, but some analysts say the current overall force could easily fall short by more than 70,000....

A Pentagon-appointed panel recently concluded that the military would lack the forces to handle its current combat and stabilization operations if new crises emerged. The report, which has not been made public, apparently did not address the issue of a draft. But some policy makers have said it points to the potential need for one....

There is little political appetite in Washington for a new draft. "The one sure way to lose public support for the war in Iraq is to say we will institute a draft." (NYT, 10/3)

Afghans still in despair

Two and a half years after the establishment of President Hamid Karzai's first government, the Afghans' dream of seeing law and order restored seems remote. The former warlords' militias, which have been promoted to the status of regular army units...are still very much in business

Last year, 1.3 million more Americans slid into poverty.
One in eight Americans are now living in poverty
One in five children in this country live in poverty
By the way, these aren't numbers some liberal made up--these are the Bush administration's own numbers.

— and have lost none of their bad habits....People want a central government, but the militias call the tune....

The warlords' main aim would seem to be to hang on to power and to the money....In one village a commander collected all the inhabitants' voting cards and promised them he would vote on their behalf....

What the Afghans most want is a government capable of providing them with security and jobs. They are beginning to despair of getting help from the international community... . (GW, 10/7)

Productivity = long hours

Politicians and CEOs like to boast about the productivity of American workers. But here's the dirty little secret: U.S. productivity is No.1 in the world when productivity is measured as gross domestic product per worker, but our lead vanishes when productivity is measured as GDP per hour worked....

The U.S. "productivity advantage" is just another way of saying that we work more hours....

Twice as many American as European workers put in more than 48 hours per week....

Americans just need the money, given that the U.S. has the most unequal income distribution in the developed world. (L.A. Times)

Dems are equal bombers

I don't believe a Gore administration would have been much better, nor would a Kerry one be. Doubt it?....Clinton bombed Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the ex-Yugoslavia. Bush is on schedule to bomb the same number of countries by 2008. (GW, 10/7)

Big Oil: More Africa plots

Links have been discovered between senior American military officials and the failed coup plot in Equatorial Guinea that has left Sir Mark Thatcher facing trial in South Africa....

Both the US and Britain have extensive oil interests in Equatorial Guinea.(GW, 10/7)

Fox not the only liars

How much would we trust the corporate TV news if we knew that many major corporate broadcast groups filed legal briefs defending Fox TV's position...that it is not against the law to lie to the American public on TV? (MinutemanMedia.org, 9/15)

Israel will raid Iran for US

...Israel has repeatedly warned that it may take direct action to stop an Iranian nuclear bomb "going critical"....

Israeli prime minister, Ariel Sharon, was once part of a three-man inner circle that kept even the sympathetic administration of President Ronald Reagan completely in the dark as they planned and carried out the daring 1984 airstrike on Iraq's Osirak nuclear plant....

A repeat against Iran would be universally perceived as American in spirit, even if exclusively Israeli in execution.... (GW, 9/30)

MEMORIES From MAY DAY 1946

In 1946 I participated in arguably one of the largest communist-led marches ever in the U.S. On May 1st, over 200,000 workers and youth, men and women, black, Latin and white, marched down New York's Eighth Avenue to 17th Street and east to Union Square. The May Day March began at 10:00 AM and ended 12 hours later. It was organized by the Communist Party (CP) through a broad "United May Day Committee" with a base in the trade union movement, as well as in other mass organizations.

Communists demonstrated against mass unemployment in Union Square in 1933

At that time the CP was very influential in the CIO (the merger with the AFL was a decade away). Communists had organized and led many of the CIO unions. Some, like Ben Gold, president of the Furriers Union, were open communists. In fact, the communist-led union I was to become a member of four years later, Local 65, had won May Day as a paid holiday in its contracts.

The March was a big event in New York City. The Cold War was about to take off, but there was still a large reservoir of good will towards the Soviet Union which most workers had recognized as the main force defeating Hitler, a sentiment which the bosses' media was trying to combat. The day before the March the NY Daily News (somewhat like the FOX NEWS/NY Post today) ran an editorial urging people "not to throw bottles and stones at the marchers, not to pelt them with rotten fruit," etc. — a virtual open invitation for fascists to attack the marchers. But the well-organized security and overwhelming number of marchers easily repelled any such attacks.

The CP had just been reconstituted the year before, after it was dissolved by its chairman Earl Browder who was then expelled. It still had tens of thousands of members, and possibly hundreds of thousands of sympathizers, in the New York area. Many thousands had fought in World War II against Hitler. These veterans would march in their army and navy uniforms, first in their union contingents, and then would circle back to march under the banners of the CP, the rear contingent. All the while they would be carrying American flags. Red flags were few and far between.

The CP had many "front" groups. One was the International Workers Order (IWO) — sort of an insurance benefit group — which had chapters representing perhaps 20 different nationalities. When the marchers were backed up on 17th Street, waiting for Union Square to be cleared, the IWO's national groups would present their various national dances, decked out in their national dress. It was all very festive, but of course had a marked nationalistic character.

Slogans, signs and chants included stuff like, "Black and white, unite"; "Defend the Soviet Union"; "We want peace"; "Wages up, prices down, make New York a union town," and others calling for a "Socialist USA."

The March really represented two sides of the communist movement. One was a base among workers, especially in the leadership of many unions, in recognition that the working class was, as Marx said, the revolutionary class. But the other side, which had begun to overwhelm any revolutionary character, viewed the CP as the "vanguard of democracy," championing "America's democratic principles" and the Bill of Rights (marching behind the stars and stripes, not the red flag). This was soon to lead into "the peaceful road to Socialism" nonsense which sent the CP into a real revisionist (fake leftist) tailspin, never to recover. The CP's Marxist school, an 8-story building on the corner of 6th Avenue and 16th Street, didn't call itself the Marx-Lenin Institute or some such name but rather the "Jefferson School," viewing this slave-owning president as a great democratic humanitarian. It reflected a real lack of class understanding.

On the one hand, those May Days — eventually abandoned by 1950 — showed what communists could do with a base in the working class. But as it turned out this was primarily a base for reform, not for revolution. When the Cold War onslaught hit the unions, the communists were ousted rather easily. Not having had a real political base, they fought it with a "free speech" defense — "all points of view should be represented in the union" — rather than on the basis that communists were the best fighters for the working class because they had the only solution for workers' problems: the destruction of capitalism with a communist revolution.

Years later, when I joined PLP, I was to realize that huge numbers following a wrong line was no way to advance to communism. Twenty years later PLP resurrected May Day but under truly revolutionary banners✪

Imperialist Drive for Oil Behind Massacre in Sudan

The U.S. government and several civil rights leaders have declared that the murders, rapes, and displacement of the population in Darfur — a region in the western part of Sudan — is genocide, requiring determined action to forestall another disaster like the one in Rwanda. In fact, Rev. Walter Fauntroy and Joe Madison, two leaders of struggles against police brutality, have even called for sending U.S. troops to stop the killing. Yet the European Union and the African Union, while agreeing there's a crisis, have declined to label it genocide, criticizing the U.S. government for that declaration. The UN itself has refrained from that label. What's going on? In fact, there are other bloody conflicts of a similar magnitude in Uganda and the Congo, with nary a word from the Bush crowd. Why is Darfur different? Oil!

Darfur is a traditional rural sector of Sudan. It's organized largely on a tribal basis with little direct control from Khartoum, Sudan's capital. Rival tribes make their living differently, some through subsistence farming and some through cattle-raising, causing a clash: agriculture is settled while cattle-raising is more nomadic and needs much more space. Despite these conflicting economic needs, historically the tribes have resolved disputes through mediation by councils of elders. But recently, this traditional setting has been disrupted.

A rebel movement based in the farming villages opposes the movement of people off their land, which the central government is pursuing to make way for oil exploration. The central government has funded irregular militias, the Janjaweed, and indoctrinated them in militant Islamic fundamentalism, and had them conduct harsh military actions against the rebels and the agricultural villages. With a green light from Khartoum, they're wreaking havoc, seeking to permanently displace the agricultural tribes. This would leave the area populated by the cattle-raising tribes, the government-backed paramilitaries, and oil companies drilling for black gold, expanding Sudan's relatively new petroleum industry.

In 1999, Sudan opened its first export pipeline. Chinese and Indian firms dominate Sudan's petroleum industry. Discovered reserves are substantial. Other reserves have only been explored but the Chinese and Sudanese governments plan to co-develop them.

As U.S. imperialism's oil plans in the Middle East become increasingly bogged down in the Iraqi quagmire, every alternative oil source increases in importance. U.S. bosses, concerned about threats in oil-producing Venezuela and Nigeria and likely behind the recent coup in Equatorial Guinea, worry about a Sudan oil industry dominated by China, the major emerging rival of U.S. imperialism. Thus, regime change in Khartoum is an increasingly important goal for U.S. imperialists. The Darfur oil fields remained completely outside U.S. influence, at least until the rebellion erupted last year. Now U.S. bosses want to use the current crisis to further weaken the Khartoum government.

The el-Bashir government in Sudan is fascist. It took power in a coup and formed a Muslim fundamentalist government similar to the Taliban in Afghanistan, with goals of implementing the Shari'a legal system (chopping off hands for theft and the like). The international working class must destroy this bourgeois government every bit as much as that of any other capitalist state. But it can't do this by allying with U.S. imperialism, inviting in U.S. troops to be "peacekeepers."

The bosses' press and politicians claim they're "morally outraged" over Darfur and say they don't want to repeat the "world community's" "untimely response" to the Rwandan massacres. But it was precisely the imperialists that made Rwanda such a horror! The French, British and U.S. backed different sides in the Tutsi-Hutu conflict, causing it to escalate to genocide.

It's imperative that we not become cheerleaders and activists for U.S. imperialism acting under the guise of humanitarianism. Instead, we must defeat the system that uses local nationalist and religious forces to whip up race/religion hatred, making settlement of differences virtually impossible. The U.S. has used Islamic fundamentalism (directly creating bin Laden) and local nationalists — supplying and supporting Saddam Hussein for many years during the Iran-Iraq war — to wage war for the profit interests of U.S. companies under an ideological cover. Therefore, so we must not endorse any U.S. intervention. Even involvement by the African Union and/or the UN is suspect, since they don't represent the interests of the international working class either.

Can something be done to stop the rampage in Darfur? Yes, but the specifics may seem indirect. We must reach out to Sudan's working class, which has shown in the past that it has a strong commitment to communist ideas. In fact, the old Communist Party came to power for a short time in 1968, but by then its opportunism led it into a coalition with the capitalists. Soon, this coalition fell to a military coup. Reaching out to any imperialists or to Sudanese government troops will make things worse. A political revolution and fundamental change is required. Our goal must be to deepen the base for communism within the international working class in the U.S., Sudan and elsewhere.

Building PLP, selling and distributing CHALLENGE, forming study groups and recruiting to PLP on an international basis is the best way to oppose mass murder in Sudan. This may seem indirect and even cold towards the plight of the dying, malnourished children of Darfur. But no other route is available. Allying with one imperialist or another is a strategy that will only prolong the struggle against capitalism and produce more casualties for the working class worldwide.✪